

The Climate Sunday coalition calls for moral leadership from the UK government in the wake of COP26

While there have been some welcome agreements reached in Glasgow at COP26, the outcomes of the conference on the whole fell short of what was needed to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees.

The Climate Sunday coalition urges the UK government to show moral leadership and to take bolder action at home on the climate crisis after COP26. With the likelihood that countries will be asked to ramp up their pledges to cut greenhouse gas emissions within a year - instead of waiting another five - it is urgent that rich countries step up their domestic action before then to be in a position to commit more internationally.

Climate Sunday is a broad coalition of Christian denominations and organisations who acted together to mobilise churches in the lead up to COP26 and represents thousands of churches across Britain and Ireland. The coalition urges churches to keep going on their commitments to environmental action, and to continue to put pressure on the UK government to deliver on its climate responsibilities.

Andy Atkins, Chair of Climate Sunday and CEO of A Rocha UK explains: *“It is vital that we see COP26 not as the end of global efforts to avoid climate catastrophe, but as a step along the way, with much more yet to be done. Churches have much to offer to address this challenge, and we must use all of our assets - buildings, land, local influence and national voice - to respond. Collectively, churches participating in Climate Sunday have accomplished much, but we have only just begun.”*

The UK's hosting of COP26 has proved a catalyst for churches' engagement with climate action across Britain and Ireland with more than 2,200 churches holding climate focused church services, committing to practical action in their local communities, and speaking up on climate issues over the last year. For many congregations, Climate Sunday represented the first time they had taken action on the climate crisis. At COP26, Climate Sunday hosted a stall in the green zone, showcasing these commitments made by churches over the course of the campaign.

Hannah Brown, Campaign and Churches Engagement Officer at the Joint Public Issues Team, said: *“We know that the journey ahead as we transition to net-zero across the world will not be easy. We are grateful that church communities across*

Britain and Ireland have been part of enabling the legacy of COP26 to be more than a negotiated outcome, but also a transformation of grassroots churches' engagement in climate action".

Reverend Judith Morris, General Secretary of Baptist Union of Wales said *"We give heartfelt thanks for what has been achieved over the past two weeks at COP 26: for new agreements and for the ways in which so many from the faith communities have joined together to create such a positive momentum for the care of our planet and its future. We pray that all agreements - and more - will be honoured recognising that in order to ensure a good tomorrow our work continues today with no room for procrastination".*

Richard Murray, chair of Eco-Congregation Scotland, said "Climate Sunday demonstrates that churches are tackling the climate emergency with urgency, leading by example, with Christians increasingly motivated and supported to care and act for God's creation. Scotland's churches were delighted to welcome the world to COP26. While we called on leaders to achieve more through the Glasgow Climate Pact, we can all continue to seek transformational change at home and support climate justice globally. Net Zero commitments by local churches and national denominations ensure that we must all take practical action now."

Reverend Andrew Orr, Church of Ireland and chair of Eco-Congregation Ireland said *"Churches across Northern Ireland have really responded to the Climate Sunday initiative, but following COP26 there is much more to be done. We hope and pray that churches throughout the island of Ireland will see this as a springboard to continue to work for climate justice, through worship, through practical action, and calling on those in our governments to make the courage decisions we need to keep warming below 1.5C."*

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For images and interviews with spokespeople please contact:

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Notes to Editors: Spokespeople available for interview in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland include:

· Andy Atkins, Chair of Climate Sunday and CEO of A Rocha UK

- Stephen Curran, Manager of Eco Congregation Scotland, Steering Committee for Climate Sunday
- Reverend Judith Morris, General Secretary of Baptist Union of Wales
- Reverend Andrew Orr, Church of Ireland representative and chair of Eco-Congregation Ireland
- Shermara Fletcher, Principal Officer for Pentecostal, Charismatic & Multi-cultural Relations, Churches Together in England

1) Climate Sunday initiative, organised by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) is the UK's broadest based Christian initiative on climate change in the run up to COP26. 'Climate Sunday' has been the broadest-based christian coalition for action on climate change.

Climate Sunday has formal backing from CAFOD, Christian Aid, Tearfund, The Salvation Army, A Rocha UK, Operation Noah, Climate Stewards, Eco-Congregation Scotland, Eco-Congregation Ireland, Green Christian, the Church of England, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Baptist Union of Wales, the United Reformed Church, The Church of Scotland, Churches together in Wales, the Union of Welsh Independents, The Church in Wales, World Vision, The John Ray Initiative, USPG, The United Reformed Church, The Salvation Army, Joint Public Issues Team, CTBI, Christian Concern for One World, Church of Ireland, Young Christian Climate Network, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

The Climate Sunday initiative motivated hundreds more churches to sign up to one of four pre-existing church greening schemes (see below), taking the total number of participating churches past the 5,000 mark in the week before COP26. At least 747 local church representatives have signed the *Time is Now* Declaration (joining a total of 192,230 signatory from across the public sector). This calls on the UK Government, in their role as chair of COP26, to be much more ambitious in seeking faster and deeper global emissions cuts, the delivery of long-promised finance to help poorer countries adapt to the climate disruption, and a green economic recovery from Covid.

2) Church Greening Schemes

The 'Greening schemes' are award based programmes which equip churches to take action on the environment, in their church and local community. They are encouraged to do this through worship and teaching, reducing carbon emissions, land and individual lifestyles, and to speak up on the climate.

There are three principal independent schemes in the UK to help grass roots churches tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and other pressing environmental issues. They work closely together. 9,248 UK churches are now registered with one or other scheme.

Eco Church, run by A Rocha UK, for churches in England and Wales - <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk>

Eco-Congregation Scotland is an ecumenical environmental charity supporting local churches throughout Scotland to care and act for God's creation, reducing their impact on climate change and living sustainably - <https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org>

Eco-Congregation Ireland is a project of the Church in Society Forum, a standing committee of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting, encouraging churches of all denominations across Ireland to take an eco approach - <https://www.ecocongregationireland.com/>

Live Simply is the environmental award scheme of the Catholic Church in England and Wales - <https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Livesimply-award>

3) Time is Now Declaration - organised by the Climate Coalition, of which most members of the Climate Sunday Initiative are also members. <https://thetimeisnow.uk>